



THE COMMUNICATOR

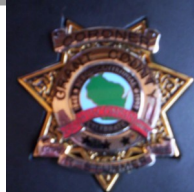
Grant County Employee Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 1
January 2005

In this quarter's issue...
Grant County Coroner

Benefit Reminders
2005 Holiday Schedule

Grant County Coroner Submitted by Ronald Sturmer, Coroner



At the present time the Grant County Coroner's Office consists of four people, I am the Coroner and I live in Lancaster, Chief Deputy Coroner James Hestad lives in Fennimore, Deputy Coroner Donovan Nelson lives in Boscobel and Deputy Coroner Christopher Johll lives in Potosi. James and I are on call twenty-four hours a day seven days a week when we are in Grant County. Christopher takes call when he is not dispatching for the Grant County Sheriff's Department; Donovan takes call on a part time basis when needed. We get paid for each case, we receive no salary and do not get paid for being on call. We do get paid mileage and by the hour for going to autopsies.

We are dispatched through the Grant County Sheriff's Department. We all carry pagers, cell phones and have two-way radios in our vehicles. When the Sheriff's Department gets a call that a coroner is needed they call the coroner that is available and closest to the incident. Some Hospice Nurses do call me directly at home when they are at a home death or a funeral director will call to tell me that he is going to a home death.

We are called to any deaths in which there are unexplained, unusual or suspicious circumstances. We go to all homicides, suicides, infant deaths, deaths due to poisoning, whether homicidal, suicidal or accidental, deaths following an abortion, deaths following an accident, whether the injury is or is not the primary cause of death, accidental deaths, home deaths and any deaths involving any type of motorized vehicle. We also handle all deaths in hospital emergency rooms when a person is brought in deceased or dies in the emergency room. In the case of a death in the emergency room a doctor is usually there and can tell us the cause of death. If the death is from a natural cause and the doctor does not know the past

medical history of the deceased, we have to check with family members, the family doctor and in some cases have an autopsy done. Hospitals notify us when a person passes away if they have been in the hospital less than twenty-four hours. We are told the circumstances of the death and can then decide if it is a Coroner's case. We go to a hospital or nursing home death when the deceased had a fracture of some type while in the facility or had a fracture within the last five years.

Most of our home deaths now involve a Hospice Program. When we arrive at these calls we check the body for signs of life and pronounce the death. A Hospice Nurse is usually there and has a form that gives us the information we need in reference to the deceased, such as name, address, date of birth, medications and a cause of death from the family doctor. This form, which I started after becoming Coroner, saves us playing twenty questions with the family at a time when they do not wish to be answering questions. When we go to a home death where a Hospice Program is not involved we check the body for signs of life, pronounce the death, and then talk with the family members and the family doctor in reference to a cause for the death.

In the case of a death at a motorized vehicle accident, after we have pronounced the death, we have to determine the identity of the victim, if this had not been done. The family is then notified by us or a member of the Sheriff's Department. When a family can be located and notified of the death they are asked which funeral home they would like to use, this funeral home is then notified. If the victim is from out of the area the closest funeral home is asked to pick up the body and hold it until family can be located. In the case where there is more than one funeral home in a city we alternate be-

tween them for these removals. In all deaths that involve a motorized vehicle Wisconsin State Statutes state that we have to obtain a sample of blood from the deceased. This is then sent to the State Laboratory of Hygiene in Madison to be tested for alcohol. Some samples are also tested for drugs.

If the death is a homicide, suicide, infant death, or accident, we investigate the incident along with a Police Department and or with the Sheriff's Department. In all homicides and suspected sudden infant deaths the bodies are taken to Madison where a forensic pathologist performs an autopsy to determine the exact cause of death. In a death involving a motorized vehicle the deceased is taken for an autopsy, if the driver causing the death is going to be charged. When a person is charged with causing a death and it goes to court, we have to prove the exact cause of death.

A Coroner, Deputy Coroner, Medical Examiner, Deputy Medical Examiner or District Attorney is the only person who can order an autopsy. Families can have an autopsy done if they are willing to pay for it and can find a doctor who will do it.

Whenever a funeral home is to pick up a body we stay at the home or accident scene to help the funeral director remove the body. In the case of a home death this is done so the family does not have to help with the removal. After the cause of death has been determined and there are no questions about the death we make out a release to embalm which releases the body to the funeral director. We are responsible for signing the death certificates in all coroner cases. We also sign death certificates when a doctor refuses to sign

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

or can not be reached within the six day time limit a funeral director has to get a death certificate signed. This happens when a family doctor is gone out of the area or a doctor comes in to cover a hospital for a weekend, pronounces a person and then leaves the area before a death certificate is ready to be signed. When a doctor pronounces a death but refuses to sign a death certificate it is usually because the deceased was not his patient and he does not know the medical history.

A Coroner, Deputy Coroner, Medical Examiner or Deputy Medical Examiner issues cremation permits. When a cremation permit is needed a funeral direc-

tor will contact one of us, we then view the body and take a picture for identification. We get a copy of the death certificate this gives us the cause of death and shows who signed as the medical certifier for the death. We also get a copy of an authorization for cremation. An adult family member or a person who had the authority to request the cremation signs the authorization. A cremation can not be done until forty-eight hours after the death, unless there is a contagious disease involved with the death.

A disinterment permit is issued by a Coroner, Deputy Coroner, Medical Examiner, or Deputy Medical Examiner, whenever a request is made to move a

body from one cemetery to another or from one lot to another in the same cemetery.

A written report is made on each case we handle, some of these reports are requested by the family of the deceased, some by insurance companies, some by the Sheriff's Department and some by the District Attorney. At times we are required to testify in court in reference to a death.

Over the past four years we have averaged two hundred and seventy three calls per year. One hundred and ninety of these were for deaths; seventy-one for cremations and the others were for autopsies and disinterments.

Benefit Reminders

Submitted by Dawn Mergen; Personnel Specialist

Do you know who your insurance beneficiary is?

As a Grant County Benefit Eligible employee, you have a Term Life Insurance policy. You also have a retirement account with the Department of Employee Trust Funds (Wisconsin Retirement System). You may be voluntarily sending pretax wages to a Deferred Compensation Plan. All of these plans / policies have beneficiary designations. Do you need to update yours?

All employees were asked to complete a **Term Life Insurance** policy beneficiary form in 2003. Call the Personnel Department if you want to check on your designation (723-2540).

Unless you file a form with the Department of Employee Trust Funds naming specific beneficiary designees before your death, your **Wisconsin Retirement** funds will be paid according to a statutory standard sequence: 1) Widow or widower; 2) Children; 3) Grandchild; 4) Parent(s); 5) Brother(s) and sister(s); 6) Estate. Under the standard sequence, payment of death benefits will be made to the person or persons in the lowest numbered group. Call 1-877-533-5020 if you wish to verify your beneficiary designation.

If you are voluntarily sending pretax wages to a **Deferred Compensation** plan (Nationwide/PEBSO, AXA Equitable, or Wisconsin Deferred Compensation Program), you may call the phone number on your most recent statement to verify your beneficiary designation.

Do you know that ...

You may **voluntarily add money into your Wisconsin Retirement account** with the Department of Employee Trust Funds. If you are interested in doing this, contact the Personnel Department (723-2540).

2005 Holidays

The following is a listing of Grant County's year 2005 observed paid holidays: (Represented employees' holidays are determined by labor agreement)

New Year's Day.....	Friday, December 31, 2004
Friday Afternoon before Easter.....	Friday, March 25, 2005
Memorial Day.....	Monday, May 30, 2005
Independence Day.....	Monday, July 4, 2005
Labor Day.....	Monday, September 5, 2005
Veteran's Day.....	Friday, November 11, 2005
Thanksgiving Day.....	Thursday, November 24, 2005
Christmas Eve.....	Friday, December 23, 2005
Christmas Day.....	Monday, December 26, 2005
The New Year's Day holiday for the year 2006 will be Monday, January 2, 2006.	

Anyone wishing to have a specific subject discussed in a future newsletter may contact Joyce Roling at 723-2045.

**May the new year bring
you peace.**

